

592 nagas or cobra-deities which were believed to
 782 guard each group were housed in the snake-grove
 in a corner of the garden and annually given
 offerings of milk and eggs by the karanavan in
 the presence of members. As well as warding
 592 off ordinary sickness and misfortune they were
 782 particularly [58] believed responsible for the
 fertility or barrenness of taravad women. Special
 offerings were made to them if a woman
 failed to conceive, and a performance was held at
 at which men and women of a low caste called
 Pulluvar played instruments and sang songs to
 entice the snakes in the grove to appear. A
 [787] group of women of the taravad, after purifying
 themselves by fasting and sex-continence for
 several days previously, then became possessed
 by the snake-gods (who are said to have "entered
 into them") and performed a wild dance, bowing
 and swaying in a circle and sweeping their hair
 along the ground. In this condition they might
 speak with the voice of the snakes and announce
 what propitiations were necessary to appease
 [158] them. Sometimes the ceremony ended with one
 or more women falling into a fit. It seems
 592 fairly certain that the snake-gods were (as so
 782 commonly elsewhere) worshipped as phallic
 symbols. Since they were definitely not re-
 garded as the spirits of dead matrilineal for-
 bears, but were capable of alternately with-
 holding fertility from taravad women or causing
 them to conceive, it is a plausible guess that
 they collectively symbolized the procreative
 powers of past genitors of the property-group,
 who had been so essential to its perpetuation yet

592 so firmly excluded from participation in its ev-
782 eryday affairs. If this were so we would have
[152] evidence that the Nayars, in spite of their ex-
treme emphasis on the matrilineal line, virtual
sexual promiscuity within the caste, and mini-
mal recognition of paternity, had an Oedipus
Complex [59] which caused men to fear and pro-
pitiate the phallic representatives of their fath-
ers, and women to have fantasies about "pos-
session" by paternal phallic symbols. Unfor-
tunately snake worship is now practically ex-
tinct; I never saw it, and found present-day in-
formants able to make few associations about it.

592 If the snake-gods were, at least unconsciously,
782 collective "fathers" of the taravad, it is inter-
831 esting that they were represented in an archaic,
dream-like form as snakes (pure phallic animal
symbols) robbed of their human attributes. This
would accord with the fact that Oedipal hostility
of the father, which must have been experienced
by Nayar children since they slept, and do today,
in the mother's room till age four or five and
have opportunity to witness parental intercourse,
would be repressed before latency and leave its
mark only in unconscious phallic fantasies about
the father which could be translated into the cul-
tural idiom of beliefs about harmful snake-gods.
Such archaic representations contrast with the
less distorted ones of male forbears of the tara-
vad.

592 These latter comprise only the spirits of dead
769 karanavans of the property-group, not of men
778 who died without attaining to headship, and very
seldom of women. (5) In each house, a room

below the Nāyar is permitted to enter. To the north, south, east, and west, there is a level entrance into this hollow square, and beyond this entrance no man of inferior caste may go. The Pānan receives a certain quantity, about 10 lb. of raw rice for his performance. 796
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In the afternoon a small crowd of Vettuvārs come to the temple carrying with them swords, not very dangerous ones, and about ten small baskets made of cocoanut palm leaves, containing salt.* These baskets are carried slung on a pole as before. These men dance and shout in much excitement, cutting their heads with their own swords in their frenzy. Some of them represent devils or some kind of inferior evil spirits, and dance madly, under the influence of these spirits which they represent. Then comes the Arayān as on the previous day with his little procession, and lastly comes the blacksmith with the sword. [411]
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It is explained by the Malayalis that the individuals of the various castes who hold the office of tailor, goldsmith and so on to the temple, do so, not for the sake of what they receive from the temple, but in order to mark their position of superiority in their caste. The ceremonial allotted to each also no doubt marks his position in the ladder of caste. [294]
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The procession in the evening of this the seventh and last day is a great affair. Eight elephants which kept line beautifully, took part in this when I witnessed it. One of them very handsomely caparisoned had on its back a priest (Mūssad) carrying a sword smothered in garlands of red flowers representing the goddess. Up to this time, when she is represented by a sword, it will be remembered she has been represented by an image. The elephant bearing the priest with the sword is bedizened on the forehead with two golden discs, one on each side of the forehead, and over the centre of the forehead hangs a long golden ornament.† He bears other jewels, and over his back is a large canopy-like red cloth richly wrought. Before the elephant walked a Nāyar carrying in his right hand in front of him a sword of the kind 796
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* The use of salt here is obscure as to the purpose. I remember a case of a Nāyar's house having been plundered, the idol was knocked down and salt was put in the place where it should have stood. The act was looked on as most insulting. [685]
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† The discs on the elephant's forehead are common in Malabar in affairs of ceremony. The Mappila poets are very fond of comparing a beautiful girl's breast to these cup-like discs.

NĀYAR

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The accuracy with which they were played on, never a wrong note although the rhythm was changed perpetually, was truly amazing. And the crescendo and diminuendo, from a perfect fury of wildness to the gentlest pianissimo, was equally astonishing, especially when we consider the fact that there was no visible leader of this strange orchestra. Early on the seventh and last day, when the morning procession is over, there comes to the temple a man of the Pānan caste (umbrella-makers and devil-dancers). He carries a small cadjan umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all round the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the cocoanut palm. His approach is heralded and noised just as in the case of the others on the previous day. The umbrella should have a long handle, and, with it in his hand, he performs a dance before the temple. The temple is situated within a hollow square enclosure, which none in caste below the Nāyar is permitted to enter. To the north, south, east, and west, there is a level entrance into the hollow square, and beyond this entrance no man of inferior caste may go. The Pānan receives about 10 lbs. of raw rice for his performance. In the afternoon, a small crowd of Vettuvans come to the temple, carrying with them swords, and about ten small baskets made of cocoanut palm leaves, containing salt. These baskets are carried slung on a pole. The use of salt here is obscure.* I remember a case of a Nāyar's house having been plundered, the idol knocked down, and salt put in the place where it should have stood. The act was looked on as most insulting. The Vettuvans dance and shout in much excitement, cutting their heads with their own swords in their frenzy. Some

* The Vettuvans were once salt-makers.